

Response from the Victorian Greens to CPSU Election Survey

Thank you for the opportunity to let CPSU members know how the Victorian Greens value and support the public sector.

In short, we are always prepared to support public sector workers in advocating to the Government on the issues outlined in your election survey. I have provided more detailed information on our position below.

Bargaining, OHS and employee relations

The Greens support industry-wide bargaining and will help push for a single VPS Agreement.

We have been very disappointed in the current Government's approach to the public sector, using public sector cuts to make savings in the budget, while privatising services and jobs.

We have vigorously opposed the current wages cap, raising its impacts multiple times in the parliament. It is outrageous Victoria has a 1.5% wages cap which is leading to many public sector workers experiencing significant real wage cuts. Wages caps of this nature not only keep wages of public sector workers down but have the effect of suppressing wages across the economy.

The Greens would abolish the wages cap and allow actual bargaining to occur. We have had this policy costed by the PBO and it forms part of our election commitments.

We have also released our policy promoting a trial of a 4-day week in the public sector. We commit to working with the CPSU on the design of the trial. We are also committed to maintaining flexible work options and will push the next government for at least 26 weeks parental leave for both parents.

We have also announced our policy to provide public sector workers with an additional 5 days reproductive leave that could be used for a range of health needs including in the case of miscarriages, terminations, hysterectomies, vasectomies, and insertion of long-acting reversible contraception, menopause symptoms and endometriosis treatment, IVF and sperm and egg donation, hormone injections or replacements, and social and medical gender transitioning therapies, including sex and gender hormone therapy and reassignment surgery.

The independence of bodies like WorkSafe are crucial and we would support legislation to require WorkSafe to report directly to parliament.

Similarly, it is vital Victoria public sector workforce does not end up with lesser protections around sex discrimination, bullying and bargaining than workers in the federal IR system. We would support mechanisms to ensure any federal protections apply to Victorian public sector workers including updating the referral.

Resourcing the future

As mentioned above, we are disappointed the government tends to reach for efficiency dividends and other public sector cuts around budget-time. Victoria's public sector workers were so crucial to how we navigated the last few very difficult years. We believe very strongly that a well-resourced public sector providing essential public services is crucial for a fair society.

We are prepared to push the next government to remove arbitrary budget mechanisms not linked to service provisions such as staffing caps and efficiency dividends.

Similarly, we remain concerned about the current government's privatisation agenda having privatised and outsourced too many essential services. We wholeheartedly agree that the contracts of outsourced service providers must be compliant with the Jobs Code.

We have no plans to move any existing VPS services to the regions and believe any such moves must be done with proper consultation with the relevant unions and workers.

The Greens are very happy to work with the CPSU on the cadetship scheme.

Addressing staff shortage

Victoria is facing staff shortages across a range of professions. Victoria's public service should be a place people want to work because of good salaries and working conditions. The public services has been so important to Victorians over the last few years managing the impact of the pandemic in particular. We can appreciate how public servants are experiencing increased stress and mental health claims.

To better value and improve conditions for public servants, the Greens would remove the wages cap, and stop using public service cuts to balance the budget, instead of asking public sector workers to do more with less.

We will consider reimbursement of HECS for higher education degree mandated occupations. Although the Australian Greens policy is to abolish HECS debts completely. Australia should be providing free tertiary education.

There are many barriers to people wanting to work in regional areas. We would consider salary incentives but also look at other barriers. For example, finding an affordable home in many regional areas is currently almost impossible. Our housing policies would make that easier.

Learning and Development and support

The Greens are open to discussing the needs of public sector workers when it comes to learning and development, including considering continuing short course delivery and stackable training options.

We are open to considering the role of the Public Service Commissioner and how it can best ensure public service employers are doing what they should.

Finally, we want to extend our thanks and appreciation to all of Victoria's public sector workers. It has been a difficult few years and we know you have been under enormous pressure in the service to all Victorians.